This is Carter (2014), *Have the Cross-Correspondences Been Explained Away*?, a note he gave me in private correspondence as follows: ABSTRACT - Magician John Booth in his 1986 book Psychic Paradoxes claims to have claims to have offered a “rational, credible, natural interpretation” for the cross correspondences, one that does not involve the necessary involvement of the deceased. However, there is nothing new in his “interpretation” which involves nothing more than mere speculation about the possibilities that the cross correspondences arose from fraud or by chance, and that these possibilities were overlooked because of the alleged stupidity and incompetence of the investigators. Despite the fact that the cross correpondences have been carefully scrutinized in several lengthy articles and books, Booth devotes a mere 8 pages to the phenomenon, and offers an analysis of not even one case. I intend to show here that there is nothing “rational, credible, or natural” about his “interpretation”, as all his speculations have been dealt with before, and do not stand up to an examination of the actual cases. As one pseudo-skeptic is said to have remarked, “never let the facts get in the way of a good debunking.”

BODY OF TEXT - The messages which became known as the cross correspondences were received by mediums in England, the United States, and India, during the period 1901–1932. Their distinguishing feature is that they appear to be meaningless when read by themselves. But when combined with messages received by other mediums at about the same time, they show various correspondences, so that when a group of them is considered together they can be seen to clearly refer to some common topic, usually from classical literature or history. They are in the form of literary puzzles, analogous to the pieces of a crossword puzzle – individually meaningless, but when combined can be seen to form a pattern. The nature of these puzzles seems to rule out telepathy between the mediums as their source. After all, if each medium does not understand their own part of the message, then how could they transmit the corresponding messages that complete and solve the puzzle?

A further difficulty these puzzles raise for the hypothesis of telepathy is that many of them required knowledge of the classics that far exceeded the knowledge of most of the mediums involved – but not that of the living Myers. In some of the best cases, solving the puzzles required a great deal of study on the part of the investigators. And throughout these investigations, the mediums frequently remained ignorant of what the other automatists had written.

What makes the cross correspondences so strangely unusual in that they seem to be a method invented “on the other side” in order to overcome the objection that alleged messages from the dead via talented human mediums could be the result of some form of extreme telepathy between mediums and the living. The defining characteristic of the cross correspondences is that messages received via one medium seemed to make no sense until they were compared to messages received via another medium from the same alleged communicator, in which common patterns were found. Booth spends two pages describing the background, and then writes

"Hypothetically, the aim of the discarnates in the beyond, who had themselves been psychic researchers while in the flesh, was to provide a demonstratable form of communication from the spirit realm that would convincingly and absolutely rule out causative factors of fraud or telepathy." (Booth, 1986, p. 172)

But there is nothing “hypothetical” about this claim, as it is constantly claimed in the scripts that this is in fact the intention of the communicators. There are many passages in the scripts that bear this out. The automatists are exhorted “to weave together” and are told that by themselves they can do little. In the script of Mrs Verrall we find: “Record the bits and when fitted they will make the whole”,

and “I will give the words between you neither alone can read but together they will give the clue he wants.” (Saltmarsh, 1938, p. 36) It is constantly claimed in 2 the scripts that the enigmatic messages are part of an experiment designed to provide convincing evidence of survival, and that the source of the enigmatic messages is the mind of Frederic Myers; or later, of some of his deceased colleagues.

Also, in several instances there are instructions in the scripts for the automatist to send her script to one of the other automatists, or to one of the investigators. As we will see, it was such instructions that first brought two of the automatists together.

Cast of Characters

In addition to Frederic Myers, the communications claimed to come mostly from the two other co-founders of the Society for Psychical Research, Edmund Gurney and Henry Sidgwick. Gurney was Myers’ friend and collaborator, and had helped write a book on apparitions titled Phantasms of the Living. He died in June, 1888. Sidgwick was a well-known philosopher at Cambridge, and was the first President of the SPR when it was founded in 1882. He died in August 1900. Later communications were received that claimed to come from Dr A.W. Verrall, a classical scholar at Cambridge who died in 1912; and from his friend Henry Butcher, another classical scholar at Cambridge who died in 1910.

The automatists included the Boston medium Mrs Piper, the only professional medium in the group. Most of the other principal mediums were upper-class women, some of them well-known figures in public life who used pseudonyms and kept their mediumship a closely-guarded secret, even from their friends. These included Mrs Verrall, wife of Dr A.W. Verrall and lecturer in Classics at Newnham College; her daughter Helen; Mrs Holland, pseudonym of Mrs Fleming, a sister of Rudyard Kipling who lived in India; Mrs Forbes, another pseudonym; and Mrs Willett, a pseudonym for Mrs Coombe-Tennant, justice of the peace and the first woman to be appointed by the British Government as a delegate to the assembly of the League of Nations.

The chief investigators were Gerald Balfour and J.C. Piddington. Balfour was an expert classical scholar, and Piddington also had sufficient knowledge of the classics to understand the frequent allusions made to them in the scripts. Both men devoted a large part of their lives to the study of the scripts, and the script intelligences took an active interest in their efforts. Others involved in a significant way include Miss Alice Johnson; Mrs Henry Sidgwick (sister of Gerald Balfour and wife of one of the communicators); distinguished physicist Sir Oliver Lodge; Frank Podmore; and Dr Richard Hodgson up to the time of his death in 1905.

The investigation of the scripts proved to be an enormous task, as they continued to appear for over thirty years, and finally numbered over three thousand. The membership of the group of mediums changed somewhat over the years. In the end over a dozen different mediums were involved, from the three countries of England, India, and the United States.

Early Messages

Shortly after Myers died in 1901, Mrs Verrall in Cambridge began to write automatic scripts which were signed “Myers.” At first they were rather poorly expressed, but gradually became more coherent. However, the messages remained cryptic, as though their true meaning were being concealed. About a year later, allusions to the same subjects began to appear in the scripts of Mrs Piper in Boston, and these too claimed to come from Myers. Some time later Mrs Verrall’s daughter Helen began automatic writing, and similar oblique references to the same subjects were found in her scripts as well.

Starting at this point, the scripts were sent to Miss Alice Johnson, secretary of the SPR.

Soon afterwards, Mrs Holland in India also began to receive messages which purported to come from Myers. On November 7, 1903 the script read, “My Dear Mrs Verrall I am very anxious to speak to some of the old friends – Miss J. – and to A.W.” These initials were taken to refer to Miss Johnson and Dr A.W. Verrall. This was followed by a largely accurate description of Dr Verrall, and finally the words: “Send this to Mrs. Verrall, 5 Selwyn Gardens, Cambridge.” (Saltmarsh, 1938, p. 46)

Mrs Holland knew the name of Mrs Verrall, as it appears in Myer’s Human Personality, which she had recently read. But she knew nothing about her personally, and most certainly did not know her address, or even if there was such a place as Selwyn Gardens, Cambridge. As such, she did not follow these instructions, but did eventually send the scripts to Alice Johnson, secretary for the SPR, who duly filed them away without suspecting that they contained allusions to the same subjects as the Verrall and Piper scripts.

It was not until 1905 that Miss Johnson realized what was happening. By that time, the scripts contained the astounding claim that the discarnate Myers, Gurney, and Sidgwick had devised the scheme of providing meaningless fragments in the scripts of different mediums, fragments which would be found to express a coherent idea only when combined. In her article of 1908 the theory of the cross correspondences is fully discussed for the first time. She first describes the nature of the messages:

"What we get is fragmentary utterance in one script, which seems to have no particular point or meaning, and another fragmentary utterance in the other, of an equally pointless character; but when we put the two together, we see that they supplement one another, and that there is apparently one coherent idea underlying both, but only partially expressed in each."

We now turn to Booth’s speculations, which fall into two categories: fraud and chance.

Conscious Fraud

Booth writes: "Does not the abundance of scholarly correspondences in the messages and the apparent cross references, prove that mediums untutored in the classics or even working together could not have fraudulently produced the messages out of their own minds? In reply, we must emphasize the studious research frequently found behind the better psychics’ work. They are not fools. (Booth, p. 174)

Booth apparently has a lower opinion of the distinguished investigators, for he writes next:

The surface personality of many so-called psychics often belies what dwells in the depths below. Underneath a socially adapted façade may lurk a mischievous seriousness. (Booth, p. 174)

As mentioned above, Mrs Piper of Boston was the only professional medium involved, and although she was studied intensively over many years, was brought to England where she had no acquaintances, and was even trailed by private detectives, not the slightest hint of fraud was ever found. (One investigator of Mrs Piper remarked, “As to fraud, that has been excluded in the Piper case for fifteen or twenty years, and only unintelligent men would talk about it any longer.” (quoted in Tymn, p. 164.)) Booth’s remarks are nothing more than a sleazy and 6 unfounded accusation against women of culture and sophistication; note that he provides not a shred of evidence to support this accusation.

Booth continues along the same lines, writing: "It may be that, among the dozen or so participating mediums, some less conscientious, self-invited individuals may have latched onto an opportunity

(the Cross Correspondences) for which they possessed few appropriate talents and were clearly cheating." (Booth, p. 176)

It very well “may be that” certain “self-invited individuals may have latched onto an opportunity”, but who exactly were these “self-invited individuals”? And what could possibly be their motive for this “opportunity”? Mediums were not paid for work on the cross correspondences, and most operated under pseudonyms in order to keep their participation a secret. Booth does not provide any names or any motive, nor could he. And if these individuals “were clearly cheating” then why doesn’t Booth provide us with even a shred of evidence?

Note that Booth also casually insults the investigators, who presumably were too stupid or gullible to detect that these “self-invited individuals were clearly cheating.”

Unconscious Fraud

Not all of Booth’s accusations are as sinister.

"The style of messages required in order to become part of this venture was obvious. Widely known were the scholarly interests, literary forms and word usages of Messrs. Gurney, Sidgwick, and Myers. Conforming to such expectations, the classical specialist, Mrs Verrall, set the tone of the transmissions from the start. Naturally, other sensitives were thereafter motivated to delve into and become familiar with related works of mythology, technical phrases, poetry, Latin and Greek writings. These materials are readily accessible in the libraries of the world. (Ibid, p. 174)

Booth continues: "Incomplete and meaningless scripts are exactly the result one might expect from quick learning autonomists sitting alone with pencil and paper trying to “receive” (recollect) unfamiliar classical passages. Recently memorized or read, difficult-to-recall materials are more easily handled in fragments. What was now being wrung out of the conscious or unconscious memory they may have honestly come to believe was surging from spirit entities – and that their own literary research was not consciously undertaken to produce this information but to be able to understand or record properly whatever strange or foreign words should present themselves psychically. Thus, sincere persons might have become self-deluded by what, on their own part, was actually an “unconscious” fabrication of messages." (Ibid, pp. 174-5)

Once again, Booth provides not a shred of supporting evidence, and the vacuous nature of this claim becomes readily apparent from an actual examination of the case material. Even assuming - for the sake of argument and without any evidence - the mediums involved did secretly study the classics, how do we account for the detailed, sophisticated, and extensive knowledge of literature and philosophy displayed in the communications at the times when a cross correspondence was not being attempted? The following is impossible to explain on the basis of “recently memorized or read, difficult-to-recall material [that] are more easily handled in fragments.”

The following comes from the mediumship of Mrs Willett. Unlike Mrs Piper and Mrs Leonard, when the English medium Mrs Willett went into a trance she did not lose control of her body as if she were asleep or in a faint. She would sit up and talk in a natural way, and Mrs Willett had no regular control. Messages usually appeared to be conveyed to her directly, and she would then pass them on to the sitters. Clearly, she was no ordinary trance medium.

Her two main communicators claimed to be the surviving spirits of Edmund Gurney, who had died in 1888, and Frederic Myers, who had died in 1901. Both men were classical scholars and founders of the Society for Psychical Research, and both had made sizeable contributions to research into mediumship and other psychical phenomena. When alive, Gurney and Myers were avid

philosophers, widely read in philosophy and psychology. On several occasions the alleged postmortem personalities of Gurney and Myers communicated through Mrs Willett the request that one of the sitters be their friend G.W. Balfour, a keen psychic researcher and president of the SPR from 1906 to 1907. On numerous occasions Balfour had engaged in philosophical discussion with Gurney and Myers before they died.

With Balfour and others present, Mrs Willett would enter a deep trance. Lively philosophical discussions would then ensue between Balfour and the communicators “Myers” and “Gurney.” The philosopher C.D. Broad commented on the content of these discussions, and wrote that all of the communications were “plainly the product of a highly intelligent mind or minds, with a keen interest in psychology, psychical research and philosophy, and with a capacity for drawing subtle and significant distinctions.” (Broad, 1962, p. 297) The purported 10 communicators also showed a thorough acquaintance with the views and terminology of books written by the living Myers and Gurney.

At these sittings there was not merely an outpouring of views which the sitter simply passively recorded and accepted. On the contrary, the sittings provided excellent examples of the conversational give-and-take that by itself stretches the ESP hypothesis nearly to the breaking point. In between sittings Balfour would leisurely examine the record of a previous sitting, and then at the next sitting would make criticisms or suggestions, and would ask for explanations of obscure matters. The communicators would address the issues raised, and would accept, or at times vigorously reject, Balfour’s suggestions. The philosopher Robert Almeder wrote that some of the sittings “were purely philosophical and sound like the transcript of an Ivy League graduate seminar on classical philosophy.” (Almeder, 1992, p. 219)

Mrs Willett had never met Myers or Gurney, yet Balfour and others were convinced that the Myers and Gurney communicators acted and spoke in ways uniquely characteristic of Myers and Gurney. Second – and perhaps even more startling – Mrs Willet was neither educated nor interested in philosophy, and showed little patience for such discussions. The attitude of her trance personality (as well as her normal personality) toward the communications can best be described as one of boredom and bewilderment. At one point, when the Gurney personality was discussing in detail some philosophical problem, she exclaimed “Oh, Edmund, you do bore me so!” At another point she complained, “you see it seems a long time since I was here with them [with Myers and friends] and I want to talk and enjoy myself. And I’ve all the time, to keep on working, and seeing and listening to such boring old – Oh Ugh!” (Heywood, 1961, p. 102) When the communicators were comparing 12 three conflicting views of the mind-body relationship – interactionism, epiphenomenalism and parallelism – she seemed to have great problems communicating the word “interaction.” At last she said, “I’ve got it.” And then, “Oh but now I’ve got to give it out. Oh, I’m all buzzing. I can’t think why people talk about such stupid things. Such long stupid words.” (Heywood, 1961, p. 103)

We cannot attribute these communications as due to unconscious fraud plus the dramatizing powers of the medium’s trance personality.

First of all, Mrs Willett never met the living Myers or Gurney, and – given the technology available at the time – almost certainly never had the opportunity of studying audiotapes of their voices. Second, the high-level philosophical discussions reflect an acquired skill – the skill of philosophizing well. But there is a substantial difference between knowledge that something is true, and knowledge of how to do something. The knowledge of how to do something – such as play an instrument or speak a language – frequently requires a skill that is only developed through years of solid practice. Learning

to philosophize well is one such skill, and these lengthy scripts are not “incomplete and meaningless.”

Reflecting on this case, philosopher C.D. Broad wrote: "Suppose we altogether rule out the suggestion that Myers and Gurney in some sense survived bodily death and were the deliberate initiators of these utterances. We shall then have to postulate in some stratum of Mrs Willet’s mind rather remarkable powers of acquiring information from unread books or the minds of living persons or both; of clothing it in phraseology characteristic of Myers and Gurney, whom she had never met; and of working it up and putting it forth in a dramatic form which seemed to their friend Balfour to be natural and convincing." (Broad, 1962, p. 313)

At any rate, Balfour found the communications so natural and convincing that he came to believe that he was indeed discussing philosophy with the departed spirits of Myers and Gurney, and that no other hypothesis could explain the data as well. The philosophical views expressed by the Myers and Gurney communicators certainly did not seem to come from his mind, since both of the communicators contradicted Balfour’s opinions on several occasions. When, for instance, Balfour argued that the conscious and subconscious minds of one person may communicate with each other by telepathy, the Myers personality would have none of this. When, on another occasion, Balfour suggested that the conscious and subconscious selves were as separate as two persons are separate, the Gurney communicator firmly replied “Bosh! Different aspects of the same thing.”

Cooperation among Mediums

In a variation of the fraud hypothesis, Booth writes: "Limited cooperation among two or more sensitives may also have developed at one point or another. What would be more natural than for one automatist to write casually, and at first innocently, in a social letter to another: “Yesterday, Myers came through to me quoting, oddly, from Browning and suggesting anagrams. What peculiar stuff!” Would it be surprising if the recipient of this “offhand” comment did not find herself receiving comparable messages the next day? (Booth, p. 175)

Once again, Booth provides not a shred of evidence to support his claim. Several of the autonomists did not even know each other; and at important periods, one (Mrs Holland) was in India, another (Mrs Piper) was in the United States, and the rest were in Great Britain. It is hard to see how the conspiracy could be carried out without the aid of the investigators, as the scripts were often written under their own eyes. Moreover, several writers have commented on the enormous amount of work that would have been required. For instance, Rosalind Heywood describes a simple experiment that a skeptic can perform to illustrate the amount of knowledge, ingenuity, and research required to create these puzzles:

To construct an elementary cross correspondence, a topic or quotation from a particular author must be chosen and further quotations collected from his work which allude to this topic but do not mention it directly. Puns are allowed. Finally an independent investigator must find the clue which binds the quotations into a coherent whole. Anyone who tries to construct a cross correspondence of the quality of those which claimed to come from the Myers group will sympathize with the remark in Mrs Willett’s script which purported to be made by Dr Verrall shortly after his death: “This sort of thing is more difficult to do than it looked.”

And could the mediums even have possibly communicated with each other in the time required? They were found in three different continents, and in the days before email, letters would take weeks or months to arrive. The next two cases are simply inexplicable as due to communication between mediums.

Thanatos

As Mrs Piper in Boston awoke from trance on April 17, 1907 a word was spoken which was first heard as “Sanatos,” then repeated as “Tanatos.” Mrs Sidgwick, the sitter, inserted a note saying that “Thanatos” was probably meant. On April 23, in the waking stage of the seance, the word was correctly pronounced as “Thanatos”, and on May 7 “I want to say Thanatos” came through in the waking stage. Thanatos is the Greek word for “Death.”

By this time the investigators had learned that the repetition of a word in a disconnected fashion was usually a signal that it is being used in a cross correspondence.

On April 16, 1907 Mrs Holland in India wrote the following words: “Maurice Morris Mors. And with that the shadow of death fell upon his limbs.”

It was thought that ‘Maurice Morris’ were the first attempts at “Mors”, the Latin word for “Death.” The later occurrence of the English word “death” points to this.

On April 29, 1907, Mrs Verrall in England wrote: Warmed both hands before the fire of life. It fades and I am ready to depart… Manibus date lilia plenis… Come away, come away, Pallida mors.

Finally, in the same script came the message: “You have got the word plainly written all along in your own writing. Look back.” “Warmed both hands…” is a quotation from a poem by nineteenth-century English poet, Walter Landor. Manibus date lilia plenis [Latin for “Give lilies with full hands”] is a quotation from a section of Virgil’s work The Aeneid, in which Anchises fortells the early death of Marcellus. “Come away, come away” is from a song by Shakespeare, and the next word in the song is “death.” (Come away, come away, death, and in sad cypress let me be laid; Fly away, fly away, breath: I am slain by a fair cruel maid. - Shakespeare, Twelfth Night, II, 4)

Pallida mors [Latin for “Pale death”] are the first two words, in the original Latin, from a line in Odes by Horace. (Pale Death, with impartial step, knocks at the poor man’s cottage and the palaces of kings. (Pallida Mors aequo pulsat pede, pauperum tabernas regumque turris) - Horace, Odes, 1.4)

In a period of less than two weeks, the same keyword was given by three mediums located in three different continents, in three different languages, combined with indirect references to the same topic.

The Roden Noel Case

On March 7, 1906 Mrs Verrall’s script in England contained an original poem, which started with the words: Tintagel and the sea that moaned in pain.

When Miss Johnson read this she was struck by its similarity to a poem by Roden Noel, entitled “Tintadgel.” To the best of her recollection, Mrs Verrall had never read this poem.

On March 11, 1906 Mrs Holland’s script in India contained these words: This is for A.W. Ask him what the date May 26, 1894 meant to him – to me – and to F.W.H.M. I do not think they will find it hard to recall, but if so – let them ask Nora.

The date given, which meant nothing to Mrs Holland, is the death of Roden Noel. The initials A.W. refer to Dr Verrall, and F.W.H.M. refers of course to F.W.H. Myers, both of whom knew Noel, but not very well. Nora means Mrs Sidgwick, which seems appropriate, as Noel was an intimate friend of Dr Sidgwick.

On March 14, before any of the above facts were known to Mrs Holland, she wrote, in a trance state:

"Eighteen, fifteen, four, five, fourteen, Fourteen, fifteen, five, twelve. Not to be taken as they stand. See Rev. 13, 18, but only the central eight words, not the whole passage." (Quoted in Saltmarsh, 1938, p. 57. For original material, see Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, Vol. XXI)

The whole thing was meaningless to Mrs Holland, and she did not look up the passage. But Miss Johnson did, and found that the central eight words were: “for it is the number of a man.” Taking this to be a hint, she translated the numbers given in the script into the letters of the alphabet, with “d” being the fourth letter, “e” the fifth, and so on. When finished, the letters spelled Roden Noel.

There was a further reference to Roden Noel in Mrs Verrall’s script of March 16, 1906, and finally, on March 28, 1906 Mrs Holland’s script contained the name Roden Noel written out in full. Hence, the common topic of the scripts was only revealed in a later script, and by the dutiful efforts of Miss Johnson to understand the earlier scripts.

In this cross correspondence between two mediums on different continents we find three references to the same person, but given in an indirect manner which did not reveal the chosen topic to the conscious minds of the mediums. This deliberate concealment seems to be crucial to the plan of the cross correspondences: the messages are deliberately enigmatic to prevent the mediums from acquiring knowledge of the topic, in order to rule out the possibility of the mediums helping each other, normally or telepathically.

From an examination of actual cases, we can see once again the vacuous nature of Booth’s “explanation” of the cross corresponences, that is, that “they could have been the result of information transfers between those mediums who did write one another though they may never have met.” (Booth, p. 176)

Chance

Booth asserts that “across 30 years some seemingly amazing material would inevitably show up in the scripts. According to the law of averages, corresponding literary and language content would occur, sometimes expectedly, sometimes accidentally.” (Ibid, p. 176) And that is the sum total of Booth’s assertion that chance can explain at least some of the “seemingly amazing material.” The problem with this is that the possible role of chance has been thoroughly examined.

The possibility that the cross correspondences may simply due to chance coincidence may, at first glance, seem reasonable. After all, in scripts full of cryptic literary and historical allusions, we might reasonably expect occasional coincidences of theme and reference. However, an explanation in terms of chance coincidence has several strikes against it.

First of all, Piddington and Dorr tried to generate artificial cross correspondences. Fourteen people were each sent quotations, twelve in all, from Virgil, Homer, Shakespeare, Shelly, Milton, Rostand, Wordsworth and Coleridge, and were asked to write down words or phrases associated with them. The results were very different from the cross correspondences that appeared spontaneously in the scripts of the automatists. There was no tendency to return again and again to one theme, and Piddington and Dorr concluded that the few cross references that occurred bore no resemblance to the cross correspondences of the scripts.

Second, various experiments may be performed in order to attempt to create cross correspondences. Choose a book by an author whose works you are well acquainted, and pick a passage at random. Pick another book by the same author, randomly choose another passage, and try to work out a cross correspondence between the two passages. The results (or, more likely, the

lack or results) will give a clear indication of how far pure chance is likely to have been responsible for the cross correspondences.

Third, Piddington counted cross correspondence on a large scale, and found that allusions pertinent to a given cross correspondence did not wax and wane haphazardly, but arose during the appropriate period and then largely disappeared. And finally, we have seen that the cross correspondences are accompanied by explicit statements that they are indeed parts of a planned experiment. Here is another example: on March 2 and March 4, 1906 Mrs Verrall wrote a series of cryptic scripts referring to the main events in the history of the City of Rome, accompanied by a statement that she would receive a message through another woman. On March 7, five thousand miles away, Mrs Holland wrote: “Ave Roma Immortalis. How could I make it clearer without giving her the clue?” Similar remarks occur again and again. (Saltmarsh, 1975, 85-6)

For all of these reasons, chance coincidence can be effectively ruled out as an explanation.

Conclusions

With fraud and chance ruled out, Booth is left only with the stupidity and incompetence of the investigators.

The interpretations that even some impartial SPR investigators placed upon cryptic material in the thousands of automatic writings demonstrate how readily human beings can adapt evidence to fit understandable hopes or expected conclusions. (Booth, p. 176)

Once again, the vacuous and insulting nature of this comment will be readily apparent to those who examine the actual cases.

In a 1908 review of some of the earliest cross correspondences, Piddington wrote: "The only opinion which I hold with confidence is this: that if it was not the mind of Frederic Myers it was one which deliberately and artistically imitated his mental characteristics." (Piddington, 1908, p. 243)

But as the years went on, Piddington, who disliked the idea of survival, was driven more and more to the conclusion that communication from the surviving minds of Myers, Gurney, and the others was the most plausible explanation of the cross correspondences. With very few exceptions, the other investigators also came to this conclusion.

Mrs Verrall was the only medium in the group who had a substantial knowledge of the classics. However, the death of Mrs Verrall in 1916 made very little difference to the content or nature of the scripts. This contrasts sharply with the change in the scripts following the death of her husband, Dr A.V. Verrall, on June 18, 1912. Within a few weeks of his death, messages purporting to come from Dr Verrall began to appear in the scripts. There also appeared several striking literary puzzles, purportedly created by Verrall, which differed sharply in style from those which purported to come from the Myers group. Like some of the earlier puzzles, they were at first completely incomprehensible to the investigators – including his surviving wife and daughter. But after following up on clues provided in the scripts, solutions were found which indicated knowledge that very few living classical scholars possessed – but that was known to be possessed by Dr Verrall. (Excellent summaries of these cases can be found in Saltmarsh, 1938, chapter VI.)

In addition, the accompanying messages displayed many idiosyncratic personal characteristics of the living Verrall. His old friend Reverend Bayfield, after reviewing these messages, testified that “to me at least it is incredible that even the cleverest could achieve such an unexampled triumph in deceptive impersonation as this would be if the actor is not Verrall himself.” (Bayfield, 1915, p. 249)

Years of reviewing and researching the cross correspondences eventually convinced Piddington, Lodge, Miss Johnson, Mrs Sidgwick, Balfour and others that the cross correspondences were in fact what they constantly claimed to be – messages from Myers and his deceased colleagues. In 1932, as the cross correspondences were finally petering out, Mrs Sidgwick wrote an account of the history of the work of the Society for Psychical Research during its first fifty years. At the time she was President of Honor of the Society, and her keen mind and cautious approach were widely respected. At the Society's Jubilee her paper was read by her brother, Lord Balfour. After he finished, he added a personal comment:

"Some of you may have felt that the note of caution and reserve has possibly been over-emphasized in Mrs Sidgwick's paper. If so, they may be glad to hear what I am about to say. Conclusive proof of survival is notoriously difficult to obtain. But the evidence may be such as to produce belief, even though it fall short of conclusive proof. I have Mrs Sidgwick's assurance – an assurance which I am permitted to convey to the meeting – that, upon the evidence before her, she herself is a firm believer both in survival and in the reality of communication between the living and the dead." (Balfour, G. 1933. Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, 41, 1932-3, p. 26)

Balfour had also come to share this belief. Certainly very few people have been as thoroughly acquainted with the evidence from cross correspondences, and at the same time as objective and keenly critical, as were Mrs Sidgwick and Lord Balfour.

Booth's concludes his 8-page treatment of this complex set of cases with the triumphant words "believers cannot now claim that the Cross Correspondences phenomena, in their many developments, are without a rational, credible, natural interpretation." However, there is nothing new in his "interpretation" which involves nothing more than mere speculation about the possibilities that the cross correspondences arose from fraud or by chance, combined with the alleged stupidity and incompetence of the investigators. I believe I have shown here that there is nothing "rational, credible, or natural" about his "interpretation", as all his speculations have been dealt with before, and do not stand up to an examination of the actual cases.

Booth's book has largely been ignored by serious researchers. However, it would be naïve to suppose that his work will not sometimes be referenced by those who are comfortable with never letting the facts get in the way of a good debunking.

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